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Senate Advice & Consent Process Will Serve Public

*Sikkema says Senate will exercise constitutional oversight on
appointments with discretion and openness*

LANSING – The Michigan Senate’s constitutional role to offer advice and consent on gubernatorial appointments will ensure citizens that people with the utmost integrity and experience are administering government programs, Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming, said today.

“Through advice and consent, Michigan’s citizens will be well served by having competent people in key government positions,” Sikkema said during the first meeting of the Senate Committee on Government Operations. “I see the Senate’s advice and consent role as constructive and positive.”

The committee will hold its first hearings next week on two of Gov. Jennifer Granholm’s agency director appointees. Lansing Mayor David Hollister, who has been named to head the department of Consumer and Industry Services, is scheduled to appear before the committee on Jan. 14. Newly appointed Michigan Treasurer Jay Rising is scheduled to come before the committee on Jan. 15.

(MORE)

Michigan's Constitution gives the state Senate the power to reject certain gubernatorial appointments made by the Executive Branch. Such appointments include cabinet-level agency directors and members of a number of boards and commissions, Sikkema said.

Once the governor submits the name of a person appointed to a position to the Secretary of the Senate, the Senate has 60 calendar days to confirm or reject the appointment. Unlike the U.S. Senate confirmation process for administration appointments, gubernatorial appointments take effect immediately upon the filing of an oath of office, but can be rejected by the Senate anytime within the 60-day time period.

"We are going to fulfill our proper role the constitutional framers envisioned and not engage in partisan obstructionism," Sikkema said. "It is my hope and expectation that the governor will appoint only people with the utmost experience and of unquestionable personal integrity."

Sikkema also said he would not use the advice and consent process in the way that some members of Congress have used similar authority to thwart a particular chief executive's ability to make key appointments. He said the Senate would work openly in exercising its review of appointments.

Under senate rules, all governor appointments will be referred to Committee on Government Operations, which is chaired by Sikkema. Once the governor submits the name of an appointment, the committee will request the appointee to complete a background questionnaire. If the committee decides that a hearing is needed, one will be scheduled within the 60-day time period.

In addition to Sikkema, other committee members include: Sens. Bev Hammerstrom, R-Temperance, vice chairwoman; Jason Allen, R-Traverse City; Nancy Cassis, R-Novi; Bob Emerson, D-Flint, minority vice chairman; Gilda Jacobs, D-Huntington Woods; and Buzz Thomas, D-Detroit.

Today's organizational meeting of the Government Operations Committee was held to outline the advice and consent process to committee members.